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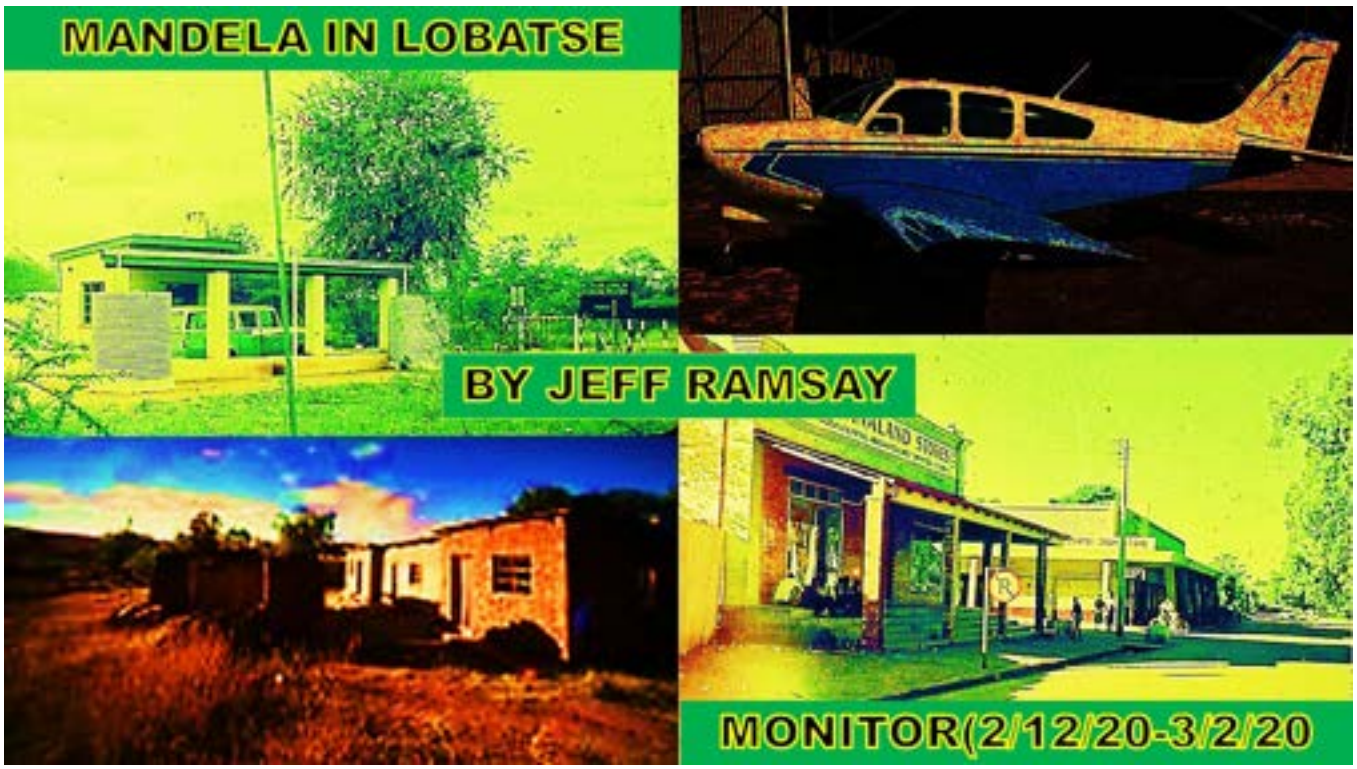
NOTES

Nelson Mandela's 1962 Movements in Botswana

Jeff Ramsay *



Introduction

In January 1962 Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela left South Africa for the first time when he crossed into Botswana, then still the British administered Bechuanaland Protectorate (BP), at the Pioneer Border Gate near Lobatse. After spending a week in Peleng Township hiding from the South African Police (SAP) he departed by air from Lobatse airstrip for Dar-es-Salaam. Five months later, on the evening of 23 July 1862, Mandela returned to Botswana, landing by plane in Kanye. Having only briefly stopped at Peleng, Mandela crossed the border back into South Africa, arriving at the secret African National Congress (ANC) headquarters at Liliesleaf farm, Rivonia on the morning of 24 July 1962.

The above basic facts about Mandela's movements through Botswana are fairly well established having been notably covered in his autobiography, and that of his local host and transit facilitator Fish Keitseng (Mandela 1994; Keitseng 1999; Landau 2002), as well as being partially depicted in the 2016 biopic film *Mandela's Gun.*

The following account, which draws on relevant BP Police surveillance reports from the period, provides additional insights into the role of Bechuanaland agents, both civilians and officials, in frustrating concerted efforts by the South African Police (SAP) to apprehend Mandela inside the BP. While the fact

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that the elements within the Protectorate's administration played a covert, as well as an overt role in the movement of freedom fighters through Botswana in the 1960s, has been previously recognised, much of the declassified documentary evidence for this has been relatively neglected. These include the relevant police reports detailing Mandela's January 1962 stay in Lobatse.

Relevant papers in the Botswana National Archives and Records Services (BNARS) were initially availed to this author and other researchers in the mid-1980s in the context of information gathering for the publication, Fred Morton and Jeff Ramsay (Eds.) *Birth of Botswana* (1987)*,* and Neil Parsons, Willie Henderson and Tom Tlou's biography *Seretse Khama* 1921-1980 (1995). For an overview see Neil Parsons, 'The Pipeline: Botswana's reception of refugees, 1956-68' (2008), and Keitseng, *Comrade Fish* (1999).

Nelson Mandela's Movements in Botswana and Departure for Tanzania

BP police reports confirm that Mandela crossed into Botswana via the Pioneer Gate at 11:15 on Thursday morning, 11 January 1962, in a motor van licence number TJ 130-833. Its Indian' driver registered himself as 'M. Ismael of 10, Main Road, Fordsburg, Johannesburg, en route for Kanye visit'. At the crossing, Mandela stayed out of sight in the back of the van (BNARS, OP 33/6 Div. Comm. South to OCSP, 15 January 1962). For both the driver and his passenger it had been a long and stressful morning. Having said goodbye to his anxious wife Winnie, at just after midnight Mandela had set out for Soweto, where he was to have rendezvoused with other ANC leaders namely Walter Sisulu, Duma Nokwe, and Ahmed Kathrada. The trio had been tasked with bringing Mandela his transport and travel credentials, along with final instructions. But only Kathrada arrived at the appointed hour, as both Sisulu and Nokwe had been arrested. As it was getting late, it was decided that alternative arrangements would have to be made to get Mandela to Lobatse for his scheduled flight to Tanganyika, from where he was to proceed to the meeting of the Pan African Freedom Movement for East, Central, and southern Africa (PAFMESCA) in Addis Ababa (Mandela 1994).

With the assistance of John Kgoana Nkadimang, it was thus arranged at the last minute for Mohammed Amien Cajee to drive Mandela in a borrowed van, which had been previously identified by the BP authorities as having been used by Joe Vincent Joseph Gaobakwe Matthews (BNARS, OP 33/6,12 January 1962). By 1962 British security in the region considered the latter figure to be acting as the overall coordinator of the movement of ANC freedom fighters in the Southern African region (BNARS, OP H196/13 III). Mandela would later describe the drive to Bechuanaland as having been 'trying', further observing that "I was nervous both about the police and the fact that I had never crossed the boundaries of my country before' (Mandela, 1994:343). From the border gate, the two drove directly to the office of Bechuanaland Air Safaris to check on Mandela's flight arrangements. Conscious of the presence in the room of the pilot Andrew Rybicki, who had months earlier been identified as an SAP Security Branch (SB) informant, the receptionist/company secretary Elsie Bartuane denied any knowledge of the flight, merely confirming that 'Captain Bertie', her husband Herbert Bartuane, would be returning from Ghanzi the following morning. In fact, Mrs Bartuane had already received a telegram on the same morning from Frene Noshir Ginwala of the ANC office in Dar-es-Salaam, stating that Mandela's flight, which had been scheduled for departure on 12 January, had to be postponed due to the late arrival 'Ben Motlahifia', who was listed as the flight's incoming passenger.

On 10 January 1962, the Lobatse branch of Barclays Bank had received telegraphic advice from London that 830 South African rands had been credited to the account of Bartuane at the order of Motlahifia, being payment for a return flight between Lobatse and Mbeya, Tanganyika. Although during their encounter with Mrs. Bartuane, Cajee and Mandela had stuck to their respective alias –Mohammed Ishmael and 'David Motsamai' -Rybecki immediately knew Mandela's identity from the photograph he had been given by his SAP handler Sergeant Pio. By the end of 1961, Nelson Mandela had assumed the alias

of David Motsamai, subsequently rendered in his Ethiopian-issued travel document as Motsamayi, while claiming domicile in Bechuanaland. In so doing he had adopted the name of one of his former clients, who shared his birthday.

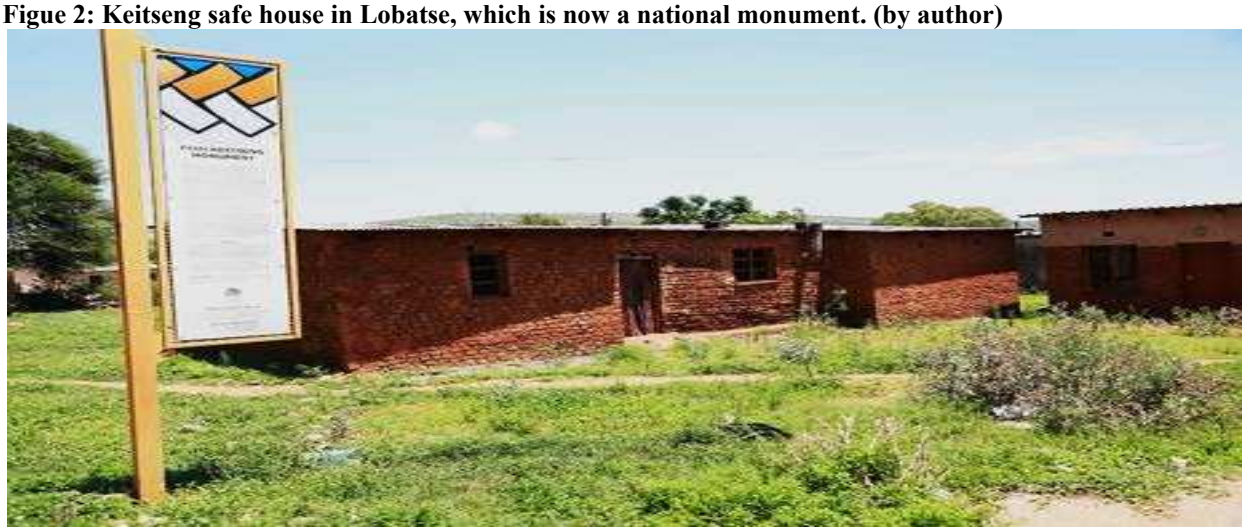
Figure 1: The real David Motsamai (left) and Mandela's traveling document (right)

Source: Independent Online for real David Motsamai and Nelson Mandela Foundation for travelling document

Rybecki shadowed the pair to the Lobatse Hotel, where Mandela like Oliver Tambo among others before him, was refused accommodation at the then still racially segregated establishment. The slight was fortuitous as the hotel was not a safe space for political refugees. Mandela then had Cajee drive him to the Peleng home of his old friend and Treason Trial comrade Ntwaesele Thatayone 'Fish' Keitseng. For his part, Rybecki had broken off his pursuit to contact the SAP. In the months following the 1960 State of Emergency in South Africa, which had led to the banning of the ANC and other anti-Apartheid resistance movements, Keitseng had become heavily involved in the underground 'pipeline' that secured the onward transport of refugees through Bechuanaland. He was thus busy expanding his home to better serve as an ANC safe house when Mandela unexpectedly arrived at his door. He would later recall that:

> One day [i.e. 11 January 1962] I was in my room, plastering the walls in the afternoon, and I had not been contacted by the ANC about any people coming. Then I saw Mandela stopping by my house in a car, driving with an Indian chap. He says, 'Hey man, I'm looking for you. I tried to book at Lobatse Hotel, but they refused. So now I'm looking for you. I said, 'Come in'. I left my tools and gave him one of my small rooms. By this time, I was starting to extend my place to accommodate the people who I was putting up. Mandela's room didn't even have a real door, just a piece of wood hanging from the wall. After discussing things with Mandela and [BP Police Corporal] Kiba, we agreed we mustn't take Mandela to see the D.C. He had already been underground a long time, and they were calling him the 'Black Pimpernel' (Keitseng 1999:54).

Figue 2: Keitseng safe house in Lobatse, which is now a national monument. (by author)



Source: author's personal collection

For his part, Cajee returned to the Lobatse Hotel, where his excessive drinking had by the early evening resulted in his detention for drunk and disorderly conduct. At the Police station, he was questioned by the local Commander, Bail, in the presence of a visitor, none other than Sergeant Pio of the SAP Special Branch. While Bail had no special reason to take particular interest in the identity of the detainee the same could not be said for Pio (BNARS, OP 33/6 Div. Comm. South to OCSP 15 January 1962). Perhaps the sight of Pio shocked some sense into the otherwise inebriated Cajee, who at any rate denied any knowledge of Mandela's presence, admitting only that he had given an unknown African a lift on the Zeerust road.

Such was the state of play when the BP Southern Divisional Special Branch Officer, Inspector Innes-Ker, returned from Kanye at around 1800 hours. Upon his arrival, he contacted Elsie Bartuane who informed him about Mandela's morning appearance with Cajee, including the unwelcome complications arising from the presence of the SAP informer Rybicki. Inspector Innes-Ker next visited the Lobatse Hotel where he spoke with an unidentified African contact, whose description he subsequently noted bore a passing similarity to Mandela. The two left the hotel, walking for a short distance together. Turning back to the hotel Innes-Ker immediately recognised that he was being shadowed by Sergeant Pio, whom he then decided to 'bump into'. The Inspector subsequently reported that 'After a certain amount of fencing' Pio admitted that he was after Mandela further correctly identifying the presence of the van that Cajee had driven across the border. Thereafter, until just before midnight Innes-Ker, assisted by Bail, kept Pio and his colleague De Klerk occupied, while other BP officers were deputised to further assess the situation. This included the identification of the arrival of a third South African Security agent, Van Willough of the Mafeking (Mahikeng) Police Criminal Investigation Department. Once confronted about his presence, Van Willough withdrew for the evening to the Railway rest quarters, leaving the next morning.

For their part, Sergeants Pio and De Klerk explained that they had decided to return from Deerdeport to Mahikeng via the Protectorate accompanied by Pio's brother-in-law. The fact that the trio had had a leisurely lunch in Gaborone before reaching Lobatse, along with the brother-in-law's sudden departure following their arrival, convinced the BP authorities that they had only become aware of Mandela's presence after being contacted by Rybicki. Given the SAP entanglements, Innes-Ker instructed that there be no attempt to contact Mandela until the following morning.

On the morning of 12 January 1962, the interrogation of Cajee, who had spent the night in custody,

resumed in the absence of SAP. At the station, Cajee maintained his ignorance of Mandela, while pleading guilty to the drunkenness charge, for which he was fined ten rands. The amount was paid by a certain Babu Abdullah after Cajee pleaded for lack of funds. Thereafter, Cajee was taken to Innes-Ker where, after further questioning, he finally admitted his knowing assistance of Mandela at the behest of Nkadimang. At the same time, his van was searched, and its paper contents, consisting of various 'garage receipts', were copied Pio (BNARS, OP 33/6 Div. Comm. South to OCSP 15 January 1962). Wishing 'to remain a friend of the refugees', and otherwise already confident of his ability to contact Mandela and Nkadimang, Innes-Ker chose not to press Cajee further, though keeping him under surveillance. In this context, it was noted that despite his pledge to immediately return to South Africa, Cajee remained in Lobatse over the next several days.

Having sent Corporal Kiba ahead of him to smooth the waters, Innes-Ker proceeded to Fish Keitseng's home to make covert contact with Mandela. Upon the Inspector's arrival, Mandela for his part reportedly apologised for not having already alerted the Protectorate authorities of his presence, pleading distrust and the need for secrecy. Given the events of the previous day, both during and after his absence in Kanye, Innes-Ker must have been thankful that Mandela had chosen to lay low following his initial rebuffs at Bartuane's office and the hotel. The Inspectors subsequent secret report to his Mahikeng superiors noted:

> From my brief contacts, it appears that Mandela is well above-average intelligence. He is certainly the most impressive 'refugee' I have yet met. During our conversations the following items of interest have been gathered: 'Mandela has no wish to seek political asylum. This is because he made a widely publicised statement that he would remain working for the Africans underground and would at no time be driven out of his country'. Mandela wishes to keep his departure from the Republic (of South Africa) a secret in order not to destroy public confidence in him. A further reason is that he intends to return to the Republic in the near future (BNARS, OP 33/6 Div. Comm. South to OCSP 15 January 1962).

The report went on to state that Mandela claimed that he only intended to proceed as far as Dar-es-Salaam to attend a conference, before returning to South Africa, probably via Bechuanaland. He further indicated a desire to visit Kgosi Kgari Sechele in Molepolole while waiting for his flight. Thereafter, for the remainder of Mandela's stay, the BP authorities remained watchful while keeping their distance. As Keitseng later observed, 'Although Mandela didn't go to the D.C., the police knew he was present. Both sides were just pretending to ignore one another' (Keitseng 1999:54). For the then Resident Commissioner, Peter Fawcus, and a few of his reliable lieutenants such as Innes-Ker the mission was clear. As the Resident Commissioner's office noted at the time in a communication to the Acting British High Commissioner in South Africa:

> Since the [30 March 1960] State of Emergency in South Africa a very large number of 'political refugees' have entered the Protectorate. Some (e.g. Oliver Tambo, Ronald Segal, Dr. Dadoo, Kgosana, etc., etc.) have been political personages of some consequence in South Africa who asked for temporary asylum and who eventually left the territory by air for Ghana and destinations overseas. They (as is now being done in the case of Mandela) were subject to special SB surveillance to ensure that the South African authorities did not kidnap or hijack them.
>
> Others who are much lesser fry and who are not of particular importance in the political hierarchy make use of established overland escape route through the territory to the Federation. It is impossible to keep track of all of them and when they disappear over the Southern Rhodesia border no further police action is taken, the policy I have instructed my officers to follow is neither

> to assist nor prevent refugees from using the escape route (BNARS, OP 33/6 Div. Comm. South to OCSP 15 January 1962).

In the above context, Fawcus knew that the safe passage of senior political figures such as Mandela was not only threatened by the Apartheid regime's security agents and their local informers, such as Rybecki but also from within the ranks of his own administration. In this respect, he was surrounded by members of the BP colonial establishment, including officers embedded in its security services, who had been recruited from either South Africa or the Rhodesias, many of whom were overtly hostile to those seeking the overthrow of white supremacy in the region.

In carrying out his legal obligation of protecting bone fide refugees within the Protectorate, while also closely monitoring their political activities, at the time Fawcus and his superiors in London, apparently including MI6 intelligence, thus relied on a relative handful of trusted figures, who notably included Special Branch officers Innes-Ker and John Sheppard and District Commissioners Peter Cardross-Grant in Gaborone, Philip Steenkamp in Francistown and Brian Egner in Kasane (Parsons 2008; Parsons and Ramsay 12 July 1999; Parsons 1999, Keitseng 1999; Parsons *et al*. 1995; Interview with Sir Peter Fawcus 9-10 October 1986). With Mandela's onward flight delayed by at least a few days, the ANC network based in Peleng and Innes-Ker's SB team remained on high alert.

At 11:00 hours the SAP Sergeants Pio and De Klerk returned to Lobatse via the Ramatlabama border post. Upon their arrival, they called on Captain Bartuane at Bechuanaland Air Safaris, who by then had returned from Ghanzi. In his conversation with the SAP officers Bartuane acknowledged that a flight had been booked, but later cancelled for the previous day. He, however, denied any knowledge of Mandela having been its intended passenger, informing Pio that the flight had instead been for a certain Mr Modise. Before returning to Mahikeng, Pio had Rybicki visited Innes-Ker's office. Falsely claiming he had been trying to reach the Inspector since the previous day, Rybicki informed Innes-Ker of his suspicions that Mandela had tried to book a flight. Pressed on whether he knew anything about the matter, Innes-Ker simply told Rybicki he had heard a similar rumour and was investigating the matter.

On the following evening, 13 January 1962, a new, potentially dangerous, threat was detected when Kiba's men operating in Peleng intercepted and detained 'a strange African in civilian dress'. During their initial interrogation, the suspect admitted that his true identity was SAP Special Branch constable Johannes Moabelo, stationed in Orlando (BNARS, OP 33/6 Div. Comm. South to OCSP 15 January 1962). It was subsequently revealed that Moabelo had entered the Protectorate via Pioneer Border gate earlier in the day acting on instructions of Major Moolman from RSA Special Branch headquarters in Johannesburg. Unconvincingly claiming that it had been his intent all along to liaise with local police, Moabelo further acknowledged that it was his mission to seek out and identify Mandela without alerting the latter to his presence. Moabelo's eagerness to stay out of Mandela's sight was in the logic of circumstance given that the two knew each other from previous encounters. His mission was thus to confirm Mandela's presence and whereabouts in Lobatse and then report to Moolman and another officer who were waiting in Zeerust. Had his target been detected Moabelo's instruction was to contact local police and ask them to detain Mandela, while alerting Moolman, who was carrying with him extradition papers for Mandela's return to South Africa to face criminal charges.

Feigning cooperation, over the next several days Moabelo was accompanied by a Bechuanaland Special Branch detail including the 'experienced and efficient' Corporal Kiba, while he searched without any success for Mandela in Lobatse. While members of the BP Police remained busy giving Moabelo, Pio, and other members of the SAP the run around in their efforts to discover the location of Mandela, across the border in Zeerust their operational commander Major Moolman waited in vain with his extradition papers.

Acting on high-level instruction from London, Peter Fawcus had a clear duty to ensure that Mandela did not fall into SAP hands while under British jurisdiction. In this context, his Divisional Special Branch Officer responsible for the Southern Protectorate, Inspector Innes-Ker, feared Moolman and his team might have more sinister cards up their sleeves. Reporting to his superiors of 'possible eventualities' he observed that 'It can be accepted that the S.A.P. are fairly sure that Mandela is in the territory, but that they do not know he is actually in Lobatsi. The least the S.A.P. will do if they become aware of Mandela's location is to apply for extradition. The possibility, despite the repercussions of the Ganyile affair, of a kidnap should not entirely be discounted'. Innes-Ker in this context was referring to an August 1961 incident when ANC activist Anderson Khumani 'Dan' Ganyile and two other refugees were kidnapped by SAP from their home inside Lesotho. Fortunately, Ganyile was able to smuggle out a letter detailing his circumstance causing an international outcry, including British MPs among others, which ultimately resulted in his and his colleague's release and repatriation back to Lesotho.

As it was in his conversations with BP Corporal Kiba, 'Moabelo said that the S.A.P. wanted to come in at night and take Mandela to the Republic' (BNARS, OP 33/6 Div. Comm. South to OCSP 15 January 1962). Although Innes-Ker noted that 'Mandela's presence was [then] known to only a limited number of Africans in Peleng and to the Police and Administrative Officers in the European community of Lobatsi', he was especially concerned about the MK fugitive's flight delay. This concern was heightened by the knowledge that through Rybicki the S.A.P. were also aware that Mandela's onward flight could not take place for at least another four days, ie. not before 19 January 1962.

Anticipating a further increase in the S.A.P. undercover presence in his jurisdiction Innes-Ker felt that it would be highly desirable, if not likely that Mandela would take off from a location other than Lobatse. The possibility of Mandela finding a safer sanctuary before catching a flight out of somewhere further north was contemplated, but until the eve of the flight he apparently remained in and around Peleng. Notwithstanding the shadow of SAP, Mandela claimed to have enjoyed his stay, later recalling:

> I stayed with my fellow Treason Trialist Fish Keitseng, who had since moved to Lobatse. That afternoon I met Professor K.T. Motsete, the President of the Bechuanaland People's Party, which had been formed mainly by ex-ANC members. I now had unexpected spare time, which I used for reading, preparing my speech for the conference, and hiking through the wild and beautiful hills above the town.
>
> I felt as though I was in an exotic land. I was often accompanied by Max Mlonyeni, the son of a friend from Transkei and a young member of the PAC. It was as though we were on safari, for we encountered all manner of animals, including a battalion of sprightly baboons, which I followed for some time, admiring their military-like organisation and movements (Mandela 1994:343-344).

Mandela's account of the period dovetails with that of Fish Keitseng who writes that:

> Mandela slept there with me, and at five o'clock in the morning, he woke up. He said he wanted to go do some training. He didn't even want to wait for tea, and he only drank some in the evening. We went on the top of a big hill, Peleng Hill, crossed it, and then went by the Kanye road until we went on the top of another hill near Bathoen's siding. You know, Mandela used to eat just once a day. Also, if we stopped somewhere to rest, he used to read books. He said he was teaching himself how to be a freedom fighter. The man was always that way. If you want to cut the tree you must first sharpen the axe. Mandela was just staying in Lobatse with me. We spent many days together, going out training in the bush. Some of the time Max Mlonyeni would join us (Keitseng 1999:54).

The routine continued for a couple of days when Keitseng and Mandela were joined by Joe Matthews, who was also to fly out to Tanganyika. Unable to arrange a northern departure and with the S.A.P. keeping a close eye on Jonas Matlou who had replaced Cajee as Mandela's local transport, Keitseng reached out to Sam Chand in Mochudi:

> I decided to go find another Indian who lived in Mochudi, called Sam Chand, who used to help refugees…early in the morning I took them to Chand's house. Mandela was supposed to go to Kasane by car to get a plane, but the airstrip was damaged there. So instead they changed the plan and they brought the plane to Lobatse. Chand and I took Mandela and Matthews to the plane when it arrived, and they went (Keitseng 1999:54).

For the next six months, Mandela toured much of Africa and the UK to mobilise support for Umkonto we Siswe's then-budding campaign of armed resistance. After meeting then Tanganyika President Julius Nyerere he flew on to Addis Ababa to attend the Pan-African Freedom Movement for East, Central, and Southern Africa (PAFMECSA). There he also gained the Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie's agreement to provide the MK with military support. Thereafter, Mandela went on to Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Mali, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Senegal, receiving funds and pledges of support along the way. In London Mandela met with anti-apartheid activists, prominent politicians, and the media. Mandela then returned to Ethiopia to begin a six-month course in guerrilla warfare. He had, however, only been able to complete a few weeks of the training before deciding with the rest of the ANC leadership that he needed to return to South Africa. Before he departed for home, Emperor Selassie presented him with a Makarov semi-automatic pistol and 200 rounds of ammunition.

Mandela's Return to South Africa through Botswana and the Keitseng Factor

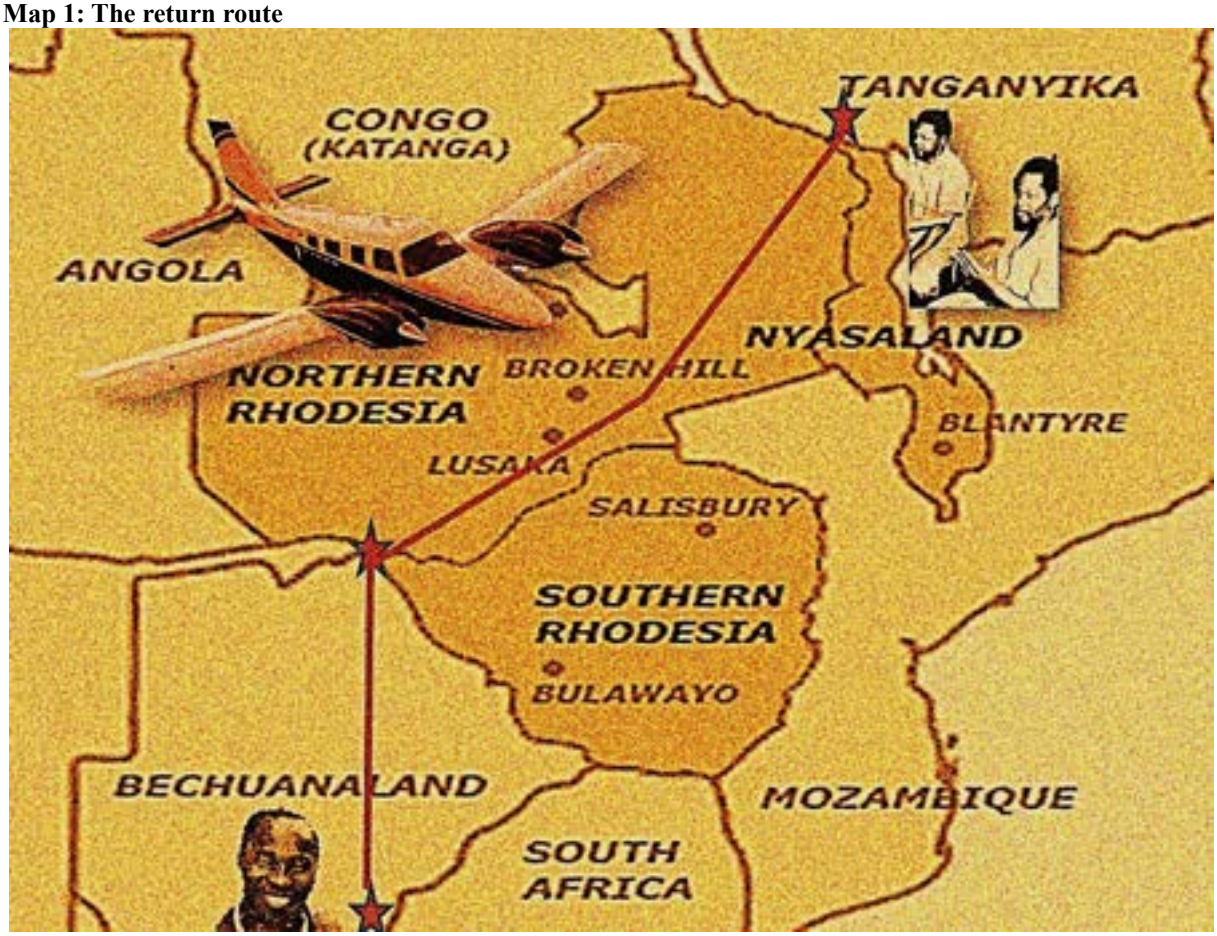
At Dar-es-Salaam Mandela was joined by the head of the ANC external wing, Oliver Tambo, to finalize plans for securing his return to South Africa, where the agents of Apartheid had been closely tracking his movements. Having decided the best route was through Bechuanaland it was arranged for Fish Keitseng to once more charter a plane from Captain Bartuane to join Tambo and Mandela at Mbeya in southwest Tanganyika. Keitseng would later recall:

> I don't know how long Mandela was gone. For some months he was touring all the countries up there in the north. One day I got another phone call. 'Mr. Keitseng, if you've got some people, bring them to Mbeya by plane. If you arrive before us, don't move anywhere'. I wasn't told I was going to pick up Mandela, but I could tell something important was up.
>
> Three people had arrived at my house so I took them and rented a charter from Bartaune, who had earlier flown Mandela to Tanganyika. He was a big chap who used to fly a lot of our people to safety. Others were also dealing with him. Once, when I was at our [ANC] headquarters in Lusaka I found him discussing payments with [ANC treasurer Tennison] Makiwane. On this trip, another pilot who worked for Bartaune flew. So many people were flying that Bartuane had bought an extra plane. We went, and slept in Kasane because we left at half past two here and it was dark when we arrived (Keitseng 1999:55).

The alternate pilot's name was Mildenhall, while the identities of the three additional passengers were Mary Mayosi, Moti Ranku, and Richard Tlala, all relatively junior activists in the banned South Af-

rican Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU). For appearances SACTU, fronting for the ANC, paid for the flight. The flight had been booked by Keitseng, accompanied by Jonas Matlou on 14 July for 20 July 1962. When its details reached Special Branch inspector Innes-Ker, he immediately suspected that the return flight (Map 1) would be carrying 'either Joe Matthews, Nelson Mandela, or possibly both'. Of the SACTU trio it was further noted that 'Party stated that they were going to an unknown destination in Tanganyika for 12 to 18-month trade union training course but gave the impression of being in considerable ignorance of true destination and purpose of journey' (BNARS OP H 196/6, Chief of Police to Government Secretary, 20 July 1962).

Map 1: The return route



Source: author's handiwork

Keitseng recalls that during their overnight stop at Kasane, the party was harassed by the local police head named Webber; who was at the time also considered by the then Chobe DC, Brian Egner, to be a security risk. Egner's posting in Kasane was a reflection of its strategic importance as a transit point for political refugees. At the time he was also part of Resident Commissioner Fawcus' small circle of officials entrusted with providing covert facilitation along the refugee pipeline. Keitseng continues:

> We tried to find where we could put up for the night. There is a big tree there, a *mowana* [baobab] tree, inside which they used to lock the criminals up. Webber told us to sleep down there. Fortunately, there was one policeman who liked us, and he said he didn't know what this white man was thinking.
>
> This guy took us to the hospital. There was a Malawi chap named Duncan Malazie [father

> of his namesake the late MP for the area] working there who took us in and got us mattresses. So, we slept comfortably at the hospital. Early in the morning, we got on the plane again.
>
> It was about twelve o'clock when we arrived in Mbeya. Because we were told we mustn't move anywhere, we just stayed at the airport. Later on, Mandela and Tambo joined us and we moved to the local hotel. We discussed plans the whole night.
>
> They wanted to know if it was safe to return through Bechuanaland. I told them it was risky, the Boers were on the lookout for Mandela night and day. They were all over Lobatse. Not just sell-outs and tsotsis but the South African Special Branch. We were watching them and they were watching us. Of course, they knew about Mandela's promise to return, it had been in all the newspapers.
>
> Since Mandela was determined to take his chances, I suggested that it would at least be safer to land in Kanye rather than Lobatse. In the morning we got in Mr. Bartaune's plane. It was me, Mandela, and that pilot [Mildehall]. The other three that I came with flew with Tambo to Dar-es-Salaam.
>
> Mandela gave me a bag with a big sack of bullets, a big bag. I took his gun, a big pistol, and put it under my jacket. He had got these things while training to be a freedom fighter in Ethiopia (Keitseng 1999:55).

In his account, *A Long Walk to Freedom*, Mandela confirmed that his Ethiopian military instructor, Colonel Tadesse 'presented me with a gift [from Emperor Selassie]: an automatic pistol and two hundred rounds of ammunition (Mandela 1994:363).

Keitseng continues: 'We intended to land in Malawi, but there were certain problems there and they refused. We picked up again until we came to Kasane, where we stopped briefly for petrol. While waiting we went into the bar at the hotel and sat down at a table. Mandela says, 'Man, I'm thirsty. Can you buy two stout beers?' I went, but when I got there they said, 'The Africans are not allowed to buy liquor in this area'. Mandela was upset. He came, and said, 'Can you repeat that again?':

> 'In this place, Africans are not allowed to buy liquor'.
> 'Can you quote a book of law that says that?'

According to Keitseng 'The barman, he failed to explain. He gave us a beer. We drank, and then we got in the plane again':

> When we were over Moshupa, I saw some people waiting by the airstrip. This made us uneasy but I told Mandela we had better land there anyway.
> When we landed at Kanye [in the evening of 23 July 1962], there two men who had come from Lobatse, Innes-Ker, who was Special Branch, and Mr. Grant, the Gaborone D.C. Innes-Ker greeted me, then he greeted Mandela. Mandela says, 'I'm not Mr. Mandela. I'm David Motsamayi'.
> Innes-Ker said, 'well if you're not Mandela I think I'll have to do something with you, I was told to meet Mr. Mandela who would be arriving with Mr. Keitseng.
> Then Mandela, said, 'Yes, I am Mandela'.
> Then Innes-Ker introduced Mandela to Grant who had nothing to say. The policeman, he didn't think about guns, he didn't ask me what I had in my coat.
> Innes-Ker then offered to drive us to Lobatse. Our own pickup was not in sight. Mandela was very suspicious of these guys, and he looked at me. I said, 'Don't worry. Let's get in their car man. They already know we're here anyway. Let's go'. So we got into Innes-Ker's car.

> Just about fifteen miles from Kanye we saw Jo Matlou's Chev coming from Lobatse. We stopped and got in it. Innes-Ker, he said, 'Mr. Mandela, please don't cross before I go see what's taking place over the border, there may be people waiting to catch you on the other side'.
> Once inside Matlou's car, Mandela smiles, and says to me, 'This bastard he wants me to be arrested. Why is he interested in me?' It was disturbing. We expected some British would be watching but did not know why they had come to greet us.

While Mandela's suspicions about the presence of Innes-Ker and Gaberones (Gaborone) DC, Peter Cardross-Grant, were understandable, available evidence suggests that they were misplaced. In this respect, Mandela may or may not have recognised Innes-Ker as the British officer who had briefly engaged him at Keitseng's house during the morning after his previous arrival and he otherwise would not have been fully aware of the BP Special Branches' proactive role in thwarting SAP efforts to apprehend him during his earlier stay in Lobatse. At the time Cardross-Grant, rather than his Lobatse counterparts, was also often entrusted with protecting the movement of political refugees.

Mandela's Return to South Africa

Mandela's exit plans were already in place. He quickly put on a white overcoat and cap to be dressed like a chauffeur. Keitseng would later recall: 'When he got to Lobatse we went to Joe Matlou's. Mandela didn't even take a cup of water. He said 'I've no time for tea. He didn't even stay five minutes. He took his clothes, put them in the car and we went. We took Mandela down by the border gate. There was just a Mongwato policeman there, Rakola. At the time there was no question of passport. They would just ask you your name and where you are going to. Rakola just opened the gate, no questions. Modise was there and picked up Mandela. I never saw him again till he came here in 1992' (Fish 1999:56). Mandela writes that 'I was to drive back to South Africa with Cecil Williams, a white theatre director and member of the MK. Posing as his chauffeur, I got behind the wheel and we left that night for Johannesburg. After I crossed the border, I breathed deeply. The air of one's home always smells sweet after one has been away' (Mandela 1994:369).

At around dawn, Mandela and Williams had reached Liliesleaf farm, which served as a principal safe house for the then underground Congress alliance. While still at Liliesleaf Mandela was reunited with the Makarov pistol he had received as a gift from the Ethiopians, which he had left behind at Lobatse. According to Keitseng 'Later on [Joe] Modise came back after dropping Mandela off, and picked up the gun and half of the bullets we brought from Mbeya' (Keitseng 199:57). For his part Peter Fawcus, in a top-secret 24 July 1962 report on Mandela's return observed that the 'Plane returned on 23 July and request landed at Kanye. Passengers were Keitseng and Nelson Mandela. Mandela proceeded directly to Johannesburg. No indication that the S.A.P. [South African Police] were aware of his arrival' (BNARS, OP H 196/6 VIII, Resident Commissioner to High Commissioner 24 July 1962). Fawcus' communication was notably marked for 'UK eyes only', indicating that it was not to be shared with other intelligence services in the region or beyond.

Having left the safety of Liliesleaf to confer with the ANC President Albert Luthuli, Mandela along with Williams were arrested while leaving Durban on 5 August 1962. Initially, Mandela was only charged with two counts - that of inciting persons to strike illegally (during a 1961 stay-at-home campaign) and that of leaving the country without a valid passport. It was only after the SAP raided Liliesleaf, almost a year later on 11 July 1963 that Mandela was further charged with treason in the famous 1963-1964 Rivonia Trial, alongside Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, and others. Available evidence suggests that Apartheid's agents were caught off guard by Mandela's landing and quick exit through Bechuanaland. Indeed, it

appears that the apartheid regime only came to know the timing of Mandela's return around the time of his capture. On 15 August 1962, Inspector Innes-Ker of the BP Special Branch, joined by his trusted Lobatse deputy Inspector Shepperd, honoured SAP Sergeant Botha's invitation to meet in Mahikeng. After initially citing a letter the SAP had received from KT Motsete warning of links between Motsamai Mpho's BPP faction and South African 'communists', Botha went on to press his guests for information about Mandel (BNARS, OP 1/6/2983, OC Special Branch to Chief of Police 15 August 1962). Innes-Ker stated that 'He [Botha] was of course very interested in Mandela and kept bringing him into the conversation; he asked whether we were able to confirm that Mandela had been in Serowe, according to the information he had given us a week or two ago. I cannot help forming the opinion that the S.A.P. are aware of the fact that Mandela returned to the Republic via B.P'.

On 28 August 1962, SB Sergeant Pio of the SAP made a follow-up visit to Innes-Ker in Lobatse during which he 'stated that they had definite information that Mandela returned to the Republic via B.P. and requested any information we had'; further adding that Mandela had 'flown from Dar to the B.P. about the 25th July', thereafter spending a week in Serowe, where he was possibly hosted by Patrick van Rensburg and/or Seretse Khama. According to Innes-Ker, Pio went on to assert that 'It was as a result of information from contacts in Serowe, so he said, that they were eventually able to arrest Mandela' (BNARS, OP 1/6/2983, OC Special Branch to Chief of Police 28 August 1962). Innes-Ker, however, believed that Pio's account was 'deliberately false information to mislead us'. While Mandela certainly did not pass through Serowe on his return passage, he may have tried to reach out to Seretse Khama as well as KT Motsete, during his January 1962 stay.

During the local filming of 'Mandela's Gun', this author was told by one credible witness that Seretse Khama, joined by Lenyeletse Seretse, did secretly meet with Mandela. But this alleged incident has not been otherwise confirmed and may rather refer to Seretse's documented meeting with Joe Matthews at about the same time. What is clear from the BP records is that Mandela's departure and return trip through Bechuanaland in 1962 underscored the growing divergence between Pretoria's securocrats and their British counterparts as it became apparent that senior Protectorate officials had been secretly aware and supportive of Mandela's movements through the B.P.

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